

# *Iowa Outdoors*

## **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

**www.iowadnr.gov**

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**Feb. 3, 2009**

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### **PROPOSAL TO RAISE FEES POSTPONED DUE TO ECONOMY**

DES MOINES – A proposal to raise hunting, fishing and trapping fees has been postponed due to the current economic conditions.

“The proposal to raise fees was very difficult for us and the decision now to postpone the request is equally as hard. Because of the continued severity of the economic downturn, we felt that now was not a good time to be raising fees,” said DNR Director Richard Leopold.

Leopold said the decision to postpone the license fee proposal was done after consulting with the Governor’s office about the timing of the request during the economic recession.

License fees go directly into the Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund. The Iowa Constitution only allows those funds to be used for fish and wildlife programs.

The last increase for resident hunting and fishing licenses occurred seven years ago. Inflation during that time has sharply reduced the amount of funding available for fish and wildlife programs.

“Because adjustments to the license fees are made so infrequently, the proposal was under consideration prior to the economic downturn. We knew already two years ago that we would need to make a rate adjustment either this year or next, but had no idea at the time that the economy would experience such a profound downturn,” Leopold said.

Leopold acknowledged that many key conservation groups as well as some Legislators recognized the need for additional funding and have supported the proposal.

“We, like everyone else, are hoping that the economic situation will improve soon, but for now, we will be tightening our belts along with the rest of Iowa’s citizens,” Leopold said.

On the plus side, Leopold said Gov. Chet Culver is proposing \$6 million in supplemental funding in his budget for weather-related damages suffered last year by the department.

“This funding would help us weather some of the financial stresses caused by the record floods and tornados of last summer,” Leopold said.

Leopold said adjusting license fees will be re-visited when the state’s economic picture improves.

A series of public meetings to discuss the Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund and proposed license increase in February and early March will also be postponed. Leopold said the DNR is looking at holding similar meetings next summer.

“We look forward to resuming this discussion with hunters, anglers and trappers. The Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund belongs to them and we very much value their input on the future of these programs,” said Leopold.

**For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at 515-281-8395.**

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## **PRAIRIE ROSE LAKE ENTERS SECOND YEAR OF RESTORATION PROJECT**

HARLAN - Plans to restore the water quality in Prairie Rose Lake made significant progress in 2008. The Prairie Rose Watershed Council was formed, soil saving treatments to the land got underway, and a diagnostic feasibility study providing a roadmap to cleaner water was completed. But the lack of a dredge spoil site has forced the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to change the timeline for this project.

“The timeline for when the lake will be drained has been moved back to after the 2010 recreation season,” says Bryan Hayes, fisheries biologist with the Iowa DNR. Hayes said they are working to identify a site within four miles of the lake that can be purchased or leased as a location to store dredge material removed from the lake bottom.

The restoration work at Prairie Rose Lake involves a two phase process with the first phase being the land treatments in the watershed around the lake and the second phase addresses in-lake issues. Reducing the amount of sediment and nutrients reaching the lake is essential to improving the quality of the water. This project is actively conducting the watershed work necessary for long lasting water quality benefits.

The Iowa DNR is partnering with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to make improvements in the watershed. The Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded a grant funding watershed work back in the spring of 2008. Nearly, 60,000 feet of terraces were rebuilt last year through this project. Best Management Practices including terraces, no-till, grade stabilization structures, grass waterways, and contour buffer strips are a few of the many practices eligible for cost share dollars.

In-lake restoration phase planned for Prairie Rose Lake includes both dredging to restore depth and a total fishery renovation to rid the lake of common carp. This work requires the lake to be drained. "Before the in-lake work can begin a spoil site needs to be located close to the lake," says Hayes.

Once the dredge spoil site is purchased, the DNR will lower the lake, eliminate the fish population, remove sediment, modify the spillway to prevent carp movement into the lake, and install fish habitat.

Prairie Rose Lake was built in 1958 and was a popular state park fishing lake in west central Iowa many years. But over time, areas of the lake filled in with sediment, a carp population has not allowed aquatic plants to take hold and stirs up sediment causing algae problems and the fish population is out of balance where crappies and bluegills rarely reach angler acceptable sizes.

"This is one of 35 priority lakes selected for restoration in the state and this project is similar to what we are doing right now at Green Valley and what was done at Lake of Three Fires," Hayes says. "Based on results from other lakes, a restored Prairie Rose Lake will be a better draw to people and provide economic benefits to the area.

"Before the Lake Restoration Program was established we could not have completed a project of this magnitude," Hayes adds. "Iowan's value good water quality and recognize that money invested in our lakes is quickly returned as we double or even triple the number of visits to a lake."

**For more information, contact Bryan Hayes, fisheries biologist, Iowa DNR, at 712-769-2587.**

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[Electronic photos available upon request]

## **COOPERATIVE YELLOW BASS DRAW WINTER ANGLERS TO CLEAR LAKE**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

**CLEAR LAKE**---The plan was simple. Meet my brother Sterling on Clear Lake, drill a couple of holes, do some Saturday afternoon ice fishing.

Although late winter angling success has been spotty across much of northern Iowa, Clear Lake has offered a somewhat more predictable venue due to its well known, and generally cooperative, population of keeper-sized yellow bass. As fame of the continued success has spread across the region, crowds of hopeful winter anglers have continued to grow. This was never more obvious than when I arrived at Farmer's Beach access. At 4:30 in the afternoon, the ice was as crowded as a discount store parking lot. Quickly scanning the nearest cluster of more than 100 ice shacks, I failed to see my brother's truck. With sundown little more than an hour away, I decided to pick my way through the crowd.

The brisk west wind cut like a knife. Although most anglers were already enjoying the toasty confines of propane heated portable shelters, many were still arriving and in the process of setting up. A smaller number of shackless fishing enthusiasts remained in the open, braving the elements while perched atop overturned plastic buckets.

There were a lot of new faces. Jeff Passer, for example, had just arrived from Kiester, Minn. After his normal ice fishing haunts had “gone stale,” Passer decided to give Clear Lake a try. This was his first excursion to the lake. Same was true for Brad Anderson and Tony Finch. Although the pair was still managing to extract a few bluegills from local pits near Waterloo, they had “heard the stories” and decided to give Clear Lake’s yellow bass a “serious, weekend effort.” If the fish cooperated, they’d stay an extra day.

Although I would have liked to stop and visit with more anglers, the clock was ticking and there was still no sign of my brother. I finally broke down and resorted to the cell phone. As it turned out, Sterling had migrated to the outer fringe of the angling cluster. Although yellow bass populations remained heavily concentrated during early winter, weeks of intense angling pressure is spreading the schools out. Moving to an area slightly less populated by anglers might improve the bite, my brother reasoned. The theory proved accurate.

Sterling had already drilled a couple of extra holes by the time I arrived at his shack. All I had to do was settle in and bait up. The fish were becoming active and he already one thick, 11-incher in the bucket. But the yellows were hitting light and we each missed two or three half hearted bites before landing another fish. Then, just as the sun vanished behind Lone Tree Point, the bass exhibited an immediate and aggressive transformation. The Sunset Frenzy was on!

Instead of making light taps and then letting the minnow go again, the yellows suddenly meant business. It was supertime. Schools were on the prowl and “No Prisoners” was their credo.

Going with a single rod, I hooked three yellows in a row and then missed the next good hit. The action was only limited by how fast we were able to unhook and re-bait.

The frenzy continued until darkness engulfed the lake. Then --- as is the case every night --- the bite ended as quickly as it had begun. This fact was not lost on the masses, as was evidenced by the sound of dozens of truck engines roaring to life. Within minutes, the red glow of retreating tail lights stretched from the middle of the lake to shore. The scene resembled a bouncing, mile-long string of outdoor Christmas bulbs. It’s the Clear Lake version of rush hour traffic.

Everyone had the same idea, it seemed: time to head home and cook fish. If there’s any better table fare than a fresh caught mess of yellow bass, I’d like to know what it is.

## **IF YOU GO:**

To cash in on the best of Clear Lake’s yellow bass action, fish the lake’s west end in a line between Farmer’s Beach [on the south shore] and the Baptist Camp [located on the north shore].

Most fish are located on the flats near the center of the lake in around 10 feet of water.

Successful anglers are using light line, pencil bobbers, and teardrop or small lead head jigs baited with fathead minnows.

Best action will occur at daybreak and again at sunset, with sunset typically the best. Don't expect many hits during the day. Although the sunset bite may prove to be red hot, the action may only last for 20 to 30 minutes. Anglers are currently reporting poor success after dark.

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## **IOWANS HELP KEEP TRACK OF IMPERILED WILDLIFE**

It's 10 o'clock on a summer night along a gravel road anywhere in Iowa. The fireflies put on a spectacular light show, and the night is calm except for the raucous chorus of male frogs making themselves heard as they vie for mates in the farm pond next to the road. A volunteer stands, clipboard in hand, ear cocked, and mentally sorting out each of the calling species and the number of individuals that might be using this seemingly ordinary pond.

Skip over to a Saturday morning by the river where another volunteer has binoculars trained on the tallest tree in the vicinity. In this tree is an enormous nest, home to two bald eagles and their brood of young. Are there two or three young in that nest? Hard to tell and a follow up visit will be needed; in the meantime, notes are taken and a peaceful half hour is spent watching one of the most spectacular birds in North America.

Both of these volunteers were trained through Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program (VWMP). Late each winter, staff with the Iowa DNR's wildlife diversity program lead three to four training workshops to teach volunteers how to collect data on some of Iowa's critical wildlife. The state is big, the species are many and the staff to monitor those species is few so volunteers are crucial to ensure that these species remain stable.

There are two programs: one for monitoring raptors and colonial waterbird nesting sites, and one for monitoring wetlands for frogs and toads. Some of the raptors the DNR is interested in monitoring are the newly de-listed bald eagle, as well as the Cooper's hawk and great horned owl.

Colonial waterbirds are so called because they nest in noisy social groups close to water and include such species as great blue herons, great egrets and yellow-crowned night-herons. All of these species exhibit a measure of site fidelity, returning to the same nest year after year. Each volunteer for the frog and toad survey program visits five to eight wetland sites three times a summer and identifies all the frog and toad species using the areas for breeding. Amphibians are an especially important group to monitor since they are declining globally and are important indicators of water quality.

Each year an army of volunteers helps the wildlife diversity program to keep an eye (and ear) on these important resources. The volunteer wildlife monitoring program provides an opportunity for people who love the outdoors and wildlife to be directly involved with the conservation and monitoring of Iowa's resources. VWMP workshops

in 2009 will be held during March in Appanoose, Carroll and Winneshiek counties. If you are interested in receiving more information or signing up for a workshop visit: <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/diversity/vwmp.html> or contact Stephanie Shepherd, 515-432-2823, [stephanie.shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:stephanie.shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov).

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## **SELLING TIMBER IN IOWA**

Tough economic times can lead to quick decisions about forest resources on the farm because of the ability to make a quick dollar. There are more than 138,000 Iowan's who own trees that are classified as forest on their property. Winter is a time of year when many forest landowners have the opportunity to sell some of their trees, but how do Iowan's determine if they are getting a good value for the trees on their property?

Selling trees is like selling grain, livestock or farmland. The best way to get the most for your land is to have an auction. Selling trees is similar in determining value. A timber buyer has to consider the species of trees, the distance to haul the logs to a sawmill, the quantity and quality of timber for sale, and market conditions for the wood products that will be made from the timber.

How does the state of Iowa sell timber? Although the DNR does not hold an auction in the traditional sense where people come to a site and bid on the timber, it does send out a bid notice to loggers explaining how many trees are for sale and the estimated board foot volume along with the date and location for opening the sealed bids. All of the bidders are allowed to attend the sealed bid opening and the winner is announced.

"The sealed bid method gives everyone interested in buying the timber the same fair chance and it helps the landowner get more for their timber through competitive bidding," says Aron Flickinger, forester with the DNR. "After all, you wouldn't sell your grain, livestock or farmland to an only bidder, would you?"

Working with a person that is trained in the field of forestry, such as a forestry consultant or a DNR forester, offers many advantages to a landowner. The woodland owner will have a contract signed that will identify which trees will be harvested and the financial arrangements for final payment. "Consultants receive a commission, much like a realtor gets when selling a house, but research has proven the owner of the trees still receives more money for their sale than if they acted independently," says Flickinger. Working with a trained forester will ensure your timber sale is set-up correctly and that the future health of your forest will be sustainable.

"Don't be taken advantage of by the friendliness of a stranger knocking on your door and offering money for your trees. After all, if they think your trees have value, don't you want to explore the opportunity of getting the most from a potential timber sale?" asks Aron Flickinger. The best method to get the best price for your trees is through competitive bidding. The best way to ensure a healthy, productive forest is by practicing good forest management. Work with a forester in your area.

A listing of consulting foresters can be found at <http://www.forestry.iastate.edu/publications/F-361.pdf>. For the local DNR forester in

your area visit our website at: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/district.html> or call (515) 242-5966.

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## **JOIN IN EARTH DAY 2009 WITH A PRAIRIE RESCUE THIS SPRING**

Once again the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation would like to help publicize volunteer prairie workdays held across Iowa each spring. Volunteers can take part in numerous prairie management activities including removal of non-native species and encroaching trees and shrubs, planting of native wildflowers and grasses, and monitoring prescribed burns. Now is the time to plan your Prairie Rescue Event.

The DNR is coordinating an effort to bring out volunteers again this year and is encouraging those interested to firm up and submit the Prairie Rescue Event plans soon.

Send the information to Whitney Davis at [whitney.davis@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:whitney.davis@dnr.iowa.gov) no later than February 19. If sponsoring an event, send an email including the site, the date and a description of the event. "If there is an interest in sponsoring a Prairie Rescue site but are not sure of what that would entail, I am happy to supply you with more information," Davis said.

**For more information, contact Davis at 515-281-6271.**

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## **NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET FEB. 12 IN DES MOINES**

DES MOINES – The Natural Resource Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 8:30 a.m., Feb. 12, in the fifth floor conference rooms in the Wallace State Office Building, in Des Moines.

Commission and DNR staff will meet at 1 p.m., Feb. 11, in the fourth floor conference room of the Wallace State Office Building for informational presentations.

Members of the commission are Kim Francisco, Elizabeth Garst, Carol Kramer, Gregory Drees, Janelle Rettig, William Bird and Tammi Kircher. The Director of the DNR is Richard Leopold.

The following is the agenda for the February meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Jan. 8 Meeting
- Director's Remarks
- Construction Projects

- Dolliver State Park, Webster County – Flood Damage Repairs
- Land Acquisition Projects
  - Brushy Creek State Recreation Area, Webster County – Land Exchange – Phillip Richardson et al
  - Lake Wapello State Park, Davis County – Dean and Lois Eakins
- Land Management Projects
  - Albright Bridge Access – Hamilton County Conservation Board
  - Management Agreement – Tunnel Mill Access – Hamilton County Conservation Board
- Notice of Intended Action - Chapter 15, General License Regulations
- Agreement with Louisa Soil and Water Conservation District
- Agreement with Boone Soil and Water Conservation District
- Wildlife Habitat Promotion with Local Entities Program Grant Review
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 71, Nursery Stock Sale to the Public
- Final Rule – Chapter 13, Permits and Easement for Construction and Other Activities on Public Lands and Waters
- Fish Habitat Promotion with Local Entities Program Grant Review
- Lake Delhi Lake Dredging and Related Improvements Grant
- Lake Rathbun Section 1135 Corps of Engineers Habitat Restoration Project
- Donations
- Honey Creek Resort State Park Monthly Update
- General Discussion
  - Commission Board Position Vote
- Items for Next Meeting, March 12, in Wright County

**For more information, contact Melissa Speed, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-281-8650.**

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